DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 914 SO 030 671

AUTHOR Casiano, Gloria M.
TITLE Music Literacy in Kindergarten.
PUB DATE 1998-12-00
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Integrated Activities; *Kindergarten; *Music Activities; *Music Appreciation; *Music Education; *Oral Language; Primary Education; *Songs
IDENTIFIERS *Music Literacy; New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

A kindergarten class from Bronx (New York) increased their skill in oral language development throughout a span of 10 weeks with daily exposure to songs, song picture books, story books, games, body percussion and instruments. Music appreciation was integrated into every area of the curriculum. The paper includes lists of songs, objectives, activities, and materials covered in the class, as well as procedures used for musical exercises for different subjects, such as mathematics, science, art, and physical education. Contains a 13-item bibliography and a 6-item bibliography of songs. (BT)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 429 914

Music Literacy in Kindergarten.

by Gloria M. Casiano

SO 030 671

Gloria M.
Casiano

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Music Literacy in Kindergarten

Gloria M. Casiano

I once heard a college professor say, "We are all musical creatures." What he was referring to was our musical inclinations, which we all possess (even though we may disagree). This sparked an interest in the area of language development for the children I teach, because many of them are bilingual and lack the skill necessary for oral communication and reading readiness.

This article is about how a kindergarten class in the Bronx, increased their skill in oral language development in a span of ten weeks, through daily exposure of songs, song picture books, story books, games, body percussion and instruments. Music appreciation was integrated in every area of their curriculum. The outcome is one of great interest for every Early Childhood teacher.

As an early childhood teacher, I am interested in the use of music to support the continual development of oral language skills in Kindergarten.

Music in Early Childhood is as significant as a hammer is to a carpenter. Through music, children learn topics from a variety of subjects, broaden their imagination, and become musically inclined.

Material Review

Four and five year olds enjoy songs that are easily mastered. These songs contain catchy tunes or phrases such as, "If You're Happy And You Know It", "Hokey Pokey", "Oh A Hunting We Will Go", "Old McDonald", etc. These are the years when even the awkward pronunciation of words does not matter. What's important is that they "play to work." From my years of observation in working with this age group, enjoyment is how children learn best, and music is a creative avenue to apprehend. Pacorek & Munro explain that children should be allowed to "express their own experiences" (1996 p. 125). The teacher can train the child to sing a particular song, but the children should be encouraged to create their own lyrics, rhythm, or music. Not only will self esteem be fostered, but oral communication and speaking skills will be strengthened. Music expression does not only stem from rote learning, but also from a child's experience with their environment.

In China, music is part of the peoples everyday life. "Recorded music is played outdoors" for a multiplicity of reasons. The value they "place on music is reflected in the evidence it receives in the primary grades." As in the U.S., music is incorporated in the curriculum as early as Preschool. Unfortunately, unlike China, the music program begins to dwindle during the time the child ensues the Seventh or Eighth grade (Brahmstedt 1997).

Although the music program in the upper grades decreases here in the U.S., greater accentuation is placed in the Early Childhood years. Through the use of song picture books, children not only learn the words of a song, but also learn to keep a simple beat. This is done with the types of songs mentioned earlier, which prepares them in reading readiness and other skills necessary for communication. As time progresses, the children begin to develop musical skills to the point where they are able to keep a beat without the help of the teacher. (Howlett 1997). Read aloud, sing aloud song picture books, create an authentic holistic literacy experience, which the children use with on another. (Jolango 1997). Literature is intended to be heard. The sounds of words and or letter, stories, or poems are designed for the ear. Since oral language consists of sounds endowed with associations and meaning, children need to experiment with language to establish a repertoire of vocabulary words necessary for communication. Retention is

essential when hearing a story or learning a song. (Brown 1963, pp. 8-14). I've observed children during various times throughout the day, singing thoroughly a song learned from a book without realizing someone was watching. Many of the children I teach are bilingual, who at first, exhibit signs of difficulty mastering the English language. Song picture books have become a great resource in language development. I can testify, year after year, the progress from September to June, of the children who began the school year with little or no English, to speaking in sentences by the end of the year. I have also observed that little ones enjoy singing, whether or not they understand what they're singing. If someone makes a mistake while singing a song they learned together, they are the first ones to correct each other.

Jalongo & Rubblet (1997), are strong supporters of song picture books for the development of literacy. They advocate, song picture books help build "familiarity & enjoyment", "repetition & predictability", "vocabulary development & knowledge of story structure", which promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills. They also believe it helps the child to foster "creative expression and language play."

Once the child has learned the words, beat, and rhythm, instruments can be included, which cause an even greater excitement. There are several birthday game songs I teach the children, because many of them don't know their birthdays or the months of the year. The children are asked to maintain a simple 4-beat rhythm with either claps, patches, or stomps. Instruments are added later on. After playing this game several times a week, every child can remember one way or another, what month they're born in, and they all can recite the months of the year collectively and individually. Lavatelli, Moore, & Kaltsounis, stress the significance creative participation in singing, listening, playing, dancing, and other musical activities are in the development of language. They also agree that all children respond to music in an innovative manner, such as creating their own lyrics to tunes and producing musical rhythms with instruments. (1972 pp. 96-97). I must agree - Not everyone participates in academic subjects, but I've yet to meet a child, who will not respond affirmatively when it concerns music. They may not all sing at first, but once the interest is sparked, a blaze of excitement and enjoyment is kindled, which cannot be quenched. They will all eventually, want to "play to work." The child should be given the opportunity to explore the instruments. The role of the teacher then becomes a facilitator, setting the stage for children to establish good language skills and healthy peer relationships. (Roopnarine & Johnson 1993, p. 142).

Dale considers that language is a "complex symbolic communication system" and "man is alone in possessing" it. Two views are, the empiricist & rationalist. Children learn to speak because of their abilities to learn and they must hear language in order to learn to speak. (Dale 1972, p. 97). A nature walk, trip to the firehouse, library, farm, or playground can create an atmosphere for children to produce their own songs, games, or play experiences, given the practice and familiarity beforehand. Here language development takes a front row seat, insomuch, that one can observe a child at their best because there is an inward need for communication, peer relationships, and a sense of belonging or connecting.

A teacher does not have to possess great performance skills in music (of which I can attest to), in order to have a high quality Early Childhood music program. (Jalongo 1996). Teachers can obtain information through various channels (such as the library, school resource room, music teacher, co-workers, administration, etc.) to establish a developmentally appropriate music program for Early Childhood. The results will be positive for both, children and teacher.

Implementation Phase

Every day in my classroom the children are involved in some type of (formal or informal) music appreciation. Song picture books, story books, along with a thematic unit, will be incorporated to reinforce the songs learned. For special seasons or events during the year, the songs the children learn are a reflection of the subjects taught.

During the first four weeks of school, have been occupied on a thematic unit about Johnny Appleseed. The children have learned several songs, such as, "Johnny Appleseed", "It Was So Good", "Twinkle, Twinkle", "If You're Happy And You Know It", "Grey Squirrel", and "Fall Can Paint." Other themes may be selected, such as, "Seasons",

"Our Environment", "Community Workers", "Families", "Famous People", "Animals", and the like.

Following, is a list of subject areas covered in our theme. They are listed under objectives, songs, activities, and procedures. The songs learned reinforced language development, which the children have learned prior to each lesson. Each song was accompanied by instruments and body percussion (claps, stomps, snaps, or patches). The constant repetition of the songs are necessary to determine if this approach, supports the furtherance of oral language development skills.

Subjects

I. Science / Social Studies
(Alternating days for four weeks)

A. Songs

1. Johnny Appleseed
2. Grey Squirrel
3. Fall Can Paint
4. It Was So Good

B. Objectives -

1. To discover the characteristics of apples and other fruits & vegetables, using the five senses.

2. To identify the changes in the season of Fall.

3. To identify Fall colors (red, green, brown, yellow, and orange)

C. Activities

1. Field Trip - Apple Picking
2. Nature Walk

D. Materials

1. Fruits and vegetables
2. Fall objects - (leaves, twigs, and the like)
3. Apple seeds
4. Box
5. Fall pictures
6. Instruments

E. Procedure

The Science / Social Studies lessons are predominantly discussion and experimentation. The children discuss what they observe through the use of their five senses. They have identified and categorized groups of food, such as fruits and vegetables. From the trip to the apple orchard, the children discovered where apples come from, and how they are transported to their neighborhood stores. They discover what is in the apple as well. The seeds are also used for discussion and an art project (mosaic apple).

After the nature walk, the children observe their environment, and discuss Fall colors and its changes. The children collect objects found from both outings to be placed in a box and used throughout the unit. Since most of the lessons will be discussion or experimentation, the children have a wonderful time expressing their findings with one another. The entire lessons are built for the opportunity of extensive oral communication.

II. Physical Education (Daily for four weeks))

A. Songs

1. Johnny Appleseed

B. Objective

1. To develop fine and gross motor skills

C. Activities

1. Relay race using apples
2. Hot Apples (Derivative of Hot Potato)
3. Find The Apple
4. Apples On A Cord

D. Materials

1. Apples
2. Instruments
3. Baskets

E. Procedure

Before and after each game, the children will sing the song using instruments or body percussion to a four beat rhythm.

The relay race will consist of two teams, the "Macintosh" and "Granny", formed in two parallel lines. At the front and back of each line there is a basket full of apples. The object of the game is to pass all the apples from one basket to the other. The winning team will have the privilege of leading the Johnny Appleseed march at the end of the game.

The game "Hot Apples" will be played in a circle. A group of children, no more than four, take turns singing the song with instruments, while the Hot Apple is going around. When they stop singing, the child left holding the apple, takes a turn to sing the song for the next round.

"Find the apple" is played in the classroom. The teacher hides the apple, while the children have their eyes covered. When the apple is hidden, the children try to find it. The teacher directs the children whether they are hot (close to the apple) or cold (away from the apple). Whoever finds the apple can share it with a

friend. The game continues until all the children have eaten a piece of apple.

"Apple on a cord" is played resembling bobbing for apples, without the water. This game continues until one person takes a bite from the apple.

III. Art (alternating days for four weeks)

A. Songs

1. Johnny Appleseed
2. It Was So Good
3. Twinkle, Twinkle
4. Fall Can Paint

B. Objectives

1. To identify colors.
2. To identify mosaic art.

C. Activities

1. Apple prints with paint
2. Mosaic apples
3. Apple Jax cereal necklace

D. Materials

1. Paint
2. Construction paper
3. Apples (cut in half horizontally)
4. Seeds
5. Glue sticks
6. Fall pictures
7. Apple Jax Cereal
8. Monofilament or Revlace
9. Instruments

E. Procedure

The children discover a star in the apples when they're cut horizontally, and observe what's inside. They identify Fall colors from their nature walk and Fall pictures. For further development of fine motor skills, they create a necklace using Apple Jax cereal. During the activity, the children are singing, while I keep a steady 4 - beat rhythm, using various instruments. The children also learn about mosaic art through the use of pictures and creating an apple mosaic. The children are learning various developmental skills throughout the art lessons, as well as keeping a steady beat while they work. Language development is constantly reinforced through singing.

III. Art (Alternating Days)

A. Songs

1. Johnny Appleseed
2. It Was So Good
3. Twinkle, Twinkle
4. Fall Can Paint

B. Objectives

1. To identify colors.
2. To identify mosaic art.

C. Activities

1. Apple prints with paint
2. Mosaic apples
3. Apple Jax cereal necklace

D. Materials

1. Paint
2. Construction paper
3. Apples (cut in half horizontally)
4. Seeds
5. Glue sticks
6. Fall pictures
7. Apple Jax cereal
8. Monofilament or Revlace
9. Instruments

E. Procedure

The children discover a star in the apples when they're cut horizontally, and observe what's inside. They identify Fall colors from their nature walk and Fall pictures. For further development of fine motor skills, they create a necklace using Apple Jax cereal. During the activity, the children are singing, while I keep a steady 4 - beat rhythm, using various instruments. The children also learn about mosaic art through the use of pictures and creating an apple mosaic. The children are learning various developmental skills throughout the art lessons, as well as keeping a steady beat while they work. Language development is constantly reinforced through singing.

IV. Reading Readiness (Daily for four weeks)

A. Songs

1. Johnny Appleseed
2. It Was So Good
3. Fall Can Paint
4. Twinkle, Twinkle
5. Chicken Soup With Rice

B. Objectives

1. To identify the upper and lower case Aa, Ff, Vv.
2. Categorizing fruits and vegetables.
3. To identify color words (green, red, yellow, brown, and orange).

C. Activity

1. Cooperative learning
2. Experiential Chart
3. Sing - A- Long

D. Materials

1. Felt Letters and Board
2. Poster paper
3. Crayons

4. Instruments
5. Literature
   a. Fall For All - Jerry Holt
   b. The Great Big Enormous Turnip - Mc Millan Reading Series For Level K
   c. Look At A Tree - Eileen Curran
   d. Apples And Pumpkins - Anne Rockwell
   e. The Tiny Seed - Eric Carle

E. Procedure

Through cooperative learning, the children explore how to build upon an experience chart, in connection with familiarities derived from resources of books and songs, read and mastered, to categorize fruits & vegetables. The children note the various words that begin with Aa, Ff, and Vv. Each day a story is read with a rhythmic beat several times. After 2 to 3 times, the children begin to read the stories on their own. The familiarity creates an atmosphere conducive to Reading Readiness skills. With this experience, the children will be encouraged to create their own stories and songs, using a familiar tune or rhythm.

V. Math (Daily for four weeks)

A. Songs

1. Johnny Appleseed
2. Fall Can Paint
3. It Was So Good
4. One, Two, Three

B. Objectives

1. Counting Readiness from 1-7
2. To identify the numerals 1-7
3. To complete a pattern
4. To identify basic shapes
5. To identify Fall colors (red, green, yellow, orange, and brown)

C. Activities

1. Cooperative Learning
2. Number Bingo
3. Guess The Number Game
4. Guess The Shape Game

D. Materials

1. Shape Blocks
2. Felt Numbers and Board
3. Crayons
4. Instruments

E. Procedure

The children play "count the apples." They cut three apples in two equal halves. They use whole and half apples to create a pattern (in groups of seven) to create seven different patterns. On the poster paper, they practice writing numbers from 1-7, and create a class book about numbers. They use the shape blocks for counting or creating more patterns. The shapes are also used to demonstrate quantity for each number. On the felt board, the children arrange the numbers in ordinal order. The Number Bingo game is used to reinforce the numbers learned up to this point. The winner takes home a candy apple.

Findings

Out of a class of fourteen children, six are bilingual and have a great difficult speaking English. Since September, through music literacy appreciation, the children have improved in vocabulary, reading readiness, communication, listening and critical thinking skills. There is a constant flux of songs the children are learning, which are difficult to forget because of the tunes, rhythms, or melodies. Ninety five percent of the children are willing to sing by themselves, as opposed to twenty percent when we first began in September. I noticed that the change came when their repertoire of songs increased. Their self-esteem in singing alone or collectively has also expanded. Sometimes, when the children are working at their tables, someone will begin to sing a song (learned in school) and the rest, or most of the children follow. This makes way for creativity (which runs like wildfire), because many of them begin to generate their own lyrics, which eventually causes all the children to join in.

Earlier, I mentioned a "Birthday Game" song the children enjoy both singing and playing. During art, one day, the teacher, (Mrs. Q), asked the children which song they wanted to sing while they worked on a cat mask. (Mrs. Q is aware that this class learns at least six to ten songs a week. The songs range from traditional and folk, to songs made up by myself or the children). It was almost as though they had rehearsed for this scenario. Simultaneously, the children began singing one of the "Birthday Game" songs I taught them the first week of school. (For each "Birthday Game" song, the children were taught to perform a number of physical activities when they hear their birthday month mentioned - Eg. "Pop up", "sit down", "stand up". During the song I or the leader use an instrument to keep a steady 2-beat rhythm while someone else points to the months of the year that are on the wall). As I

observed, one child began to point to the months of the year. Another child immediately took a drum out of the instrument box and give directions, while the rest of the children played the game. Mrs. Q then asked if they knew another song. They proceeded to sing the second "Birthday Game" song. The child who was pointing to the months gave another child a turn, and the same thing happened with the child playing the drum. The child playing the drum changed the directions to something new, (from "pop up" to "laugh a lot"). They were so involved in playing the game song that even the obvious errors did not matter, and they were by no means, intimidated or aware I was observing. The important issue became the fact that they were cooperating one with another, taking turns, generating new directions, and singing together. (Don't get me wrong. It doesn't always run this smoothly. But, this day it did!) I was very pleased of how they developed their own way of implementing the songs learned. There was high level thinking active throughout the songs, in it's purest form.

This is one of many incidences that I can attest to, of how effective music literacy has become in the continuation of oral language development in Kindergarten. Another episode was when the children were working on an "All About Me" unit in Religion. I was asking various questions regarding our uniqueness and similarities. The children gave their feedback according to their physical attributes. I began to read Psalm 139 from, God Loves Me - Three Psalms For Little Children. Before I was finished reading, one child (almost in a whisper) began singing, "It was so good." I stopped reading and acknowledged how special they really are. Before I realized what was happening, the rest joined in the song, one by one. I used the book to show the pictures as they sang. They remembered to use claps & patches, and they sped up the tempo of the song, then slowed it down again. What I realized was that they were in control (to some extent) of how they wanted to learn the Psalm. Children at this level will often send out signals as to what and how they enjoy learning.

In both events the children exhibited leadership skills, when they took the initiative and imitated the actions taught as they sang. They have also become sensitive in applying music literacy to their environment as they accomplished in the second example. Here they were able to associate a song learned to a story being read.

To some degree of simplicity, the children will create their own lyrics, such as when they learned "The Wheels On The Bus." They were taught several stanzas, through the use of a Scholastic Magazine, claps, and body movements. After singing it for some time, they were challenged to create their own lyrics. The ideas mentioned ranged from imitating the noise the metrocard creates after it goes into the token box, to people talking and laughing, and the sound the motor makes as the bus is in motion. They also described the sound the doors produce as they open and close. This simple song diverted into a unit study on Vehicles, of which at this point, is still in progress.

Sometimes thematic units will overlap, as in the case of "Johnny Appleseed" and "Fall." We had just learned "Fall Can Paint" (lyrics I created, but using the tune of "London Bridge") Several books were read (as mentioned earlier), field trips were experienced, and pictures & illustrations were discussed. One day, as we were descanting various objects the children discovered during recess, one child made mention of the number of twigs she found on the ground. "Sticks" was the word the child used and I informed the children that the other words for it were "twigs" and "branches." One child began to sing the "Fall" song substituting the word "leaves" for "twigs" because the "twigs" had fallen from the trees. The rest of the children ensued. Whenever a child begins to sing a song, during a story, discussion, or seat work, it seldom is the same child. The children have diverse interests, but singing seems to be a common way they enjoy learning.

Conclusion

With these experiences, I've come to realize that most children will let a teacher know what they want and how they want to learn it. A teacher must listen closely to signals children often send out concerning their learning environment. Some, as in these incidences, may be clear while others may not be. Teachers can then be more effective in facilitating an environment or atmosphere, which promotes age appropriate activities, conducive to the development of language acquisition, through a music literacy program.

I allow the children to freely express themselves in music appreciation, because I believe language development (along with other areas of child development) at this level is a crucial time for the child, and therefore must be encouraged to it's fullest potential. The repetition of familiarity helps the children to enjoy and predict an outcome of an event or events, with greater ease. Song picture books, singing stories, and rhymes help a child build upon a foundation for language development which will foster vocabulary, articulation and communication skills, which the child will utilize the rest of their lives. From September to the present (in less that ten weeks of school), I have observed rapid growth in language development in all the children. I am a firm believer that music literacy in Early Childhood helps further language development as well as other areas of child development.

Bibliography

Barry, K. (1987). Language, music and the sign: A Study In Aesthetics, Poetics & Practice From Collins To Coleridge. Cambridge University Press. Great Britain.

Brahnstedt, H. & P. (May 1997). Music education in China. Music Educators Journal. 28-30, 52.

Bronw, C. S. (1963). Music & literature. University of Georgia Press. USA.

Chronger, R. (1994). Teach your kids about music. Walker & Co. USA.

Dale, P. S. (1976). Language development: structure and function. Holt, Rhinehart & Winston. USA.

Howle, M. J. (March 1997). Play party games in the modern classroom. Music Educators Journal. 24-28.

Jalongo, M. R. (July 1996). Using recorded music with young children: a guide for nonmusicians. Young Children. 6-13.

Jalongo, M. R. & Ribblett, D. (Fall 1997). Using song picture books to support emergent literacy. Childhood Education. 15-22.

Kilpatrick, W. (Winter 1994-5). Music and morality. American Educator. 30-37.

Lavatelli, C. S., Moore, J., Kalsounis, T. (1972). Elementary School Curriculum. Holt, Rhinehart & Winston Inc. USA.

Paciorek, K. M. & Munro J. H. (1996). Sources: notable selections in early childhood education. Dushking Publishing Group/ Brown & Benchmark Publishers. USA.

Roopmarine, J. L. & Johnson J. E. (1993). Approaches to early childhood education. Prentice - Hall, Inc. USA.

Wilman, S. V. Fames for playtime & parties. London TC & EC Jack, LTD. Great Britain.

Bibliography of Songs

Deasy, M. (1978). Bullfrogs & Butterflies. On Birdwing [33 1/3 RPM]. Conoga Park, CA. Sparrow Records.

Groce, L. (1979). Disney's children's favorites I, II, & III. On Walt Disney Productions [33 1/3 RPM]. Vista Records USA.

McMillan McGraw-Hill (1997). Sing a sound. On McGraw-Hill Co. [Audio Cassette]. USA.

Rettino, E. (1980). The kids praise album. On Maranatha. [33 1/3 RPM]. Costa Mesa, CA. Marantha Music.

Wayman, J., Mitchel, D. (1974). On KBK [33 1/3 RPM]. Imagination & me. St. Louis Misson: Custom Records Production.

White, R., Mandell, J. (1979). Action songs for holidays & special days. On Rythm Producations [33 1/3 RPM]. Los Angeles, CA. Tom Thumb Music.